

Discussion Guide: The Smoke of 1000 Villages

Lord Jesus, stir our hearts, and lead us, your people, as you see fit so that we might lift up the name of Jesus among all nations to his glory. Nate Irwin

Leader Note: Buried within the text of this guide are questions for discussion as you lead your group through a study of God's word in today's scripture passage.

February 2, 2003: "The Smoke of 1000 Villages" by Nate Irwin, Associate Director of Outreach for College Park Church. Through his international perspective and experience in reaching others for Christ in the middle east, Brother Nate challenged us to put on our "spiritual glasses" so that we might clearly see, as the Apostle Paul envisioned in Romans 15:14-24, the great need to reach the unreached peoples of the world with the Gospel.

I would encourage you to let this vision and ambition of Paul well up in your soul. That you might take a page from Dr. David Livingston who was the great Scottish Doctor and missionary explorer in Africa. And when he was asked why it was that he was wasting his education and his career and his life on the savages of Africa, do you know what his response was? It was, "The smoke of a 1000 villages haunts my memory." It haunts mine to. What are we going to do about it? Nate Irwin

As Nate worked us through the scriptures, we began to see what Paul envisioned as the priority areas to consider when determining his next steps in reaching others for Christ. The three priorities were...

1. A competent church, vs. 14, 15. If the area has a competent church in which they are...
 - a. Full of goodness, v. 14

Q. What does a life filled with goodness look like?
 - b. Complete in knowledge, v. 14

Q. What are the characteristics of one who is growing in knowledge of Him?
 - c. Competent to instruct one another, v 14

Q. What does it take to be competent to instruct others?

...then there is no need for a missionary outreach *in that area*. Yes, there is a need for an effective ministry to equip and build up the body of believers...but not a need for missionary outreach.
2. A proclaimed Gospel, vs. 16-19 (Isaiah 66:20). If the Gospel has been proclaimed in the area, then it's time to move on to other parts of the world and to other people who have not heard the Gospel. For those who have heard and received the Gospel there is...

a. Enabling: the grace of God, v. 15c.

Q. What has God's grace enabled you to be?

b. Nature: a priestly duty, v. 16.

Q's. God has a calling for each of us. What do you feel God has called you to do? As children of God in Christ are we part of the priesthood? If yes, then what is our role? Like Paul, should we have a sense of duty in this area?

c. Fruit: an acceptable offering, v. 16.

Q. What are we as Christians to become?

d. Value: worthy of glorying in, v. 17.

Q. Does your service bring glory to God?

e. Method: word and deed, vs. 18, 19,

Q. Are people led to Christ by what you say and do?

f. Power: the Holy Spirit, v. 19.

Q's. Do you have a sense of being empowered in what you are doing for the Lord? Why is it necessary to be empowered by the Holy Spirit?

g. Scope: The Gospel is "fulfilled"...the word has been "fully proclaimed."

Q's. Have you "fully proclaimed" the Gospel in the area of the world in which God has placed you? What is yet to be done? Should we have a plan?¹

3. An uninformed people, vs 20-24. Paul's vision was to go where the need is most critical. His desire was to...

a. Preach the Gospel where Christ was not known, v. 20.

Q's. Do you know people in your sphere of influence that do not know Christ? Is Christ not known to them, or have they heard but not yet accepted?

b. Not be building on someone else's foundation, v. 20.

¹ If you are interested in developing an outreach plan, read Chapter 5 of the Flock Group Ministry Manual and the accompanying Appendix items at <http://www.bsmi.org/flockgroupministrymanual.htm>.

Q's. Is their value in building upon what others have started (some sow, some fertilize, some water, while others harvest)? What was Paul's desire? Why do you think he wanted to go into virgin territory?. Should we also pursue virgin territory? If yes, exclusively or in some balance?

c. Those who were not told will see, those who have not heard will understand, v. 21 (Isaiah 52:14,15).

Q's. What is required according to Jesus for the preached word of God to take root? What is our role in helping the process along for those we desire to come to know the Lord?

Nate challenged us to consider the fact that...

A. We, at College Park Church, are like those to whom Paul was addressing as being a "competent church" that is "full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another."

Q's. Are we fully competent? In what areas do you feel the need for improvement in your walk with the Lord?

B. The Gospel, like in Paul's journeys in Asia, has been "fully proclaimed" in the USA...with churches all over the country." In addition we have 350 Christian TV stations, 1100 Christian radio stations, 1500 Christian bookstores and over one million full-time Christian workers in America.

Q. With so many opportunities to hear the word of God, what's keeping so many from believing and living their life for God?

C. The 2 billion people (30% of the world's population) in 1,600 people groups who today could not be saved even if they wanted, because there is no preacher!

Q. Is this the smoke of a 1000 villages?

According to Nate, given Paul's instruction and vision for missions, our priority in missions should be likewise...to the unreached people of the world. Those who do not have access to the Gospel should assume our priority in missionary outreach.

Nate, asks what should we be doing at College Park Church?

1. We need to keep on doing good. We need to keep on growing in knowledge and in goodness and in instructing one another, reminding ourselves of the important points of Scripture.

Q. What else would you add to the list?

2. We need to keep on having a ministry in our own franchise area. It's important that we reach our inner city, that we reach our neighbors and our colleagues with the Gospel. Because this is where God put us.

Q's. Do you agree that reaching others for Christ in our "franchise area" should be a priority in our life? Is it? Paul had a plan for his outreach ministry. Do you have a plan? Will we some day be asked to give an account for what we have done in this area?

3. But in missions we need to focus on the unreached if we are going to fulfill Paul's vision for ministry. We need to send new missionaries to the unreached. We need to partner with other ministries that reach the unreached. And we are thinking and praying about adopting as a church an unreached people group. That God might use our church to bring a church among that unreached people group.

Q. Do you share this vision for the missionary outreach of our church? If you do, what might you do to help bring it about?

Nate's Concluding Observations and Visions

Do we still need Affirmative Action? Yes, but Spiritual Affirmative Action. We need to take some steps so that somehow those 2 billion people might have equal access not to the "Paul's of Power in Our Society" but to the Gospel.

What does this mean to each one of us as an individual? I don't know. You are going to have to take that to the Lord of the harvest.

I would encourage you to let this vision and ambition of Paul well up in your soul. That you might take a page from Dr. David Livingston who was the great Scottish Doctor and missionary explorer in Africa. And when he was asked why it was that he was wasting his education and his career and his life on the savages of Africa. Do you know what his response was? It was, "The smoke of a 1000 villages haunts my memory." It haunts mine to. What are we going to do about it?

[Editor Note: Let's do something about it!!!]

Q's. Will you commit to making it a priority in your prayer life to ask the Lord of the harvest what we as a body of believers can do

1. Corporately as a church,
2. Together within our small flock group, and
3. Individually as a faithful follower of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Nate's Closing Prayer

Jesus we are so blessed as your people. We live in Disneyland here in America...both materially and spiritually. And you have given us these blessings so that we might be a blessing to the nations. Lord we are swamped by our own problems. Help us to come to your church to find healing to find restoration so that you can bring us back to that place of being able to think about other people. It's good to come and be healed. Lord I know that there are some here this morning that can't even maybe get out of bed, much less think about reaching the unreached. Help this church minister to them and bring them to a place of health so they can be used for others. And Lord help us see the world as you see it today. That our heart might beat over this great inequity that there are still some today who would never hear the Gospel even if every Christian in the world shared their faith with their neighbors. Lord what a tragedy. Will you stir our hearts. And would you take these, your people, and lead them as you see fit so that we might lift up the name of Jesus among all nations to his glory.

And now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will. And may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.